US Army Corps of Engineers
Detroit District

News Release

Date	October 7, 1999	For Release	Immediate
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PR# 1007-1

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GREAT LAKES WATER LEVELS FALLING FASTER THAN EXPECTED

The water levels of most of the Great Lakes continue to fall at a rate faster than average for the season. Great Lakes water levels normally experience a seasonal decline in the fall due to lower rainfall, reduced inflows from rivers and streams, and from increased evaporation. This summer and early fall have been dryer than average, especially across the southern and eastern Great Lakes. Since late July, precipitation over the Lakes Michigan-Huron and Lake Erie basins has been only 40% and 50% of normal respectively. The wettest watershed in the system is Lake Superior, which has seen 125% of normal rainfall every month since June.

The Great Lakes have also been warmer-than-average throughout the summer. Warmer water causes evaporation to increase when exposed to cooler, drier fall airmasses. This has been the case through much of September, and levels have responded by falling six inches on all of the Great Lakes except Superior. The average rate of fall during September is approximately 3 to 4 inches on the middle lakes.

The Detroit District is forecasting a continuation of the faster-than-average decline in levels through October, then a slow in the descent of levels during November and December when water temperatures sufficiently cool and an expected wet fall and early winter arrive.

The Detroit District's Internet homepage at address http://www.lre.usace.army.mil provides access to additional information about the Great Lakes, including observed and forecast water levels.

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